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ABSTRACT

To meet the sociological, psychological, and linguistic needs of disadvantaged children in teaching the language arts, both special teacher preparation--involving field experiences and mastery of the subject matter as well as teaching strategies--and effective language programs are necessary. Various teaching methods and materials have met with adequate success in stimulating these children to listen, to increase their visual perception, to verbalize, to read orally and silently, to think logically and critically, and to write. (A brief bibliography is provided.) (JMC)

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LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAMS *for* DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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SYLVIA OETTLE

LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAM FOR DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

by SYLVIA OETTLE

Disadvantaged children[1] are not of any particular race, color, or creed. At times they may even be rich in the tradition of their own ethnic group, but they are in no way prepared to meet the demands of the American society at large. They are aware of this inability to succeed and are frightened and paralyzed by the recurrences of their failures. Though they would like to improve their lot, extended economic deprivation causes them little hope of anything but remaining unskilled. Consequently they become sullen, aggressive, hostile, and apathetic. They do not subject themselves to the middle-class tensions attending competition or to the extreme difficulty of establishing oneself as an individual. Rather, they free themselves from blame, holding others responsible for their unhappinesses and failures. They remain traditional, superstitious, unwilling to reason about their beliefs and suspicious of innovation.

The families of the disadvantaged are too involved in fulfilling basic needs to be concerned with more than very brief oral communication. Sometimes both parents work; sometimes they are on relief. Generally the family is matriarchically structured, with grandmothers and aunts extending the family size. Living space is meager; there is little or no privacy. Although disadvantaged children generally stay close to home, there is little verbal exchange among family members and rarely any participation in family projects. Few family activities are organized; there is little or no conversation at meals; oral exchanges, if any, occur in monosyllables or commands. Moreover, the auditory attention of these children is usually deficient, because they have had to shut out the many noises occurring simultaneously in crowded homes where radio, TV and human voices mingle in cacophony.

The interpretative skills of the disadvantaged are poor; their reading abilities are below age and grade level. There are few, if any, books, magazines, or newspapers in their environment, and the scarcity of possessions in their homes inhibits their ability to conceptualize that objects have names. Finding labelling and categorization difficult or impossible, they prefer to point or gesture.

Frank Riessman notes that these children are not stupid; they are simply slow at cognitive tasks. They appear anti-intellectual because they are pragmatic, seeming to learn better through a physical and concrete approach. If they do appreciate knowledge, it is for its practical vocational end, rather than for its own sake, since intellectualism is considered unmasculine.[2]

Because the harshness of their lives has often exposed them to adult situations, they may use more vigorous and spontaneous expressions than their comfortable middle-class contemporaries. They usually understand more language than they use, and they use many words with accuracy, but they are still in no way able to meet the vocabulary demands of the school culture. Martin Deutsch explains that their major speech form is a kind of restricted code.

> It is characterized by grammatically simple and often unfinished sentences, poor syntactical form, simple and repetitive use of conjunctions, the inability to hold a formal topic through speech sequences, a rigid and limited use of adjectives, and adverbs, etc.[3]

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[1]The "disadvantaged" are variously labelled as "culturally deprived," "culturally disadvantaged," "underprivileged," "economically restricted," or "low socioeconomically."

[2]Frank Riessman, *The Culturally Deprived Child* (New York: Harper and Brothers 1962).

[3]Martin Deutsch, "The Role of Social Class in Language Development and Cognition," in A. Harry Passow, *et. al., Education of the Disadvantaged* (New York: Holt, Rhinehart, and Winston, 1967), p. 223.

They express their emotions, not verbally, but with shrugs, hand and body gestures and facial expressions. Walter Loban notes that they do not use infinitives, appositives, or infinitive, gerundial or participial phrases. But the disadvantaged do use their language cogently and practically for immediate and actual happenings.

> . . . they are able to use many partial sentences. The tired father says to the older boy, "My slippers." He means, "Go get my soft shoes." The mother says to the daughter, "The table." She means, "It is time now for you to set the table."[4]

They do not use language to look to the future or to examine the past. They are concerned only with the present.

How then does this affect their readiness for learning and their adaptability to the learning pattern? Because of the many gaps in their knowledge, which increase progressively as they experience traditional school programs meaningless to them, they become more and more frustrated, apathetic, and demoralized.

Unaware of the ground rules for achievement, they distrust their own judgment and look for an authoritarian figure as a guide. Ironically they are unable to accept their teacher as an adult who might help find answers to their questions. Having rarely received adult approval at home, the disadvantaged find their teacher's praise alien, and they suspect it. They typically combat this fear by spotting a weakness in the teacher and testing it to the limit of the teacher's self-control.

Their attention span is poor. This factor, coupled with their lack of skill in listening, makes it difficult for them to follow directions. Moreover, discovery techniques and deductive methods are beyond their abilities. Since they must see the concrete application of what they are learning, they are far more receptive to an inductive approach. They live for the here and the now, so that long term school culture goals are unimaginable to them. David Ausubel confirms this:

> . . . the most important consequence of the culturally disadvantaged child's retardation is his slower and less complete transition from concrete to abstract modes of thought and understanding. This transition normally begins to occur in our culture during the junior high school period . . . This transition takes place more slowly and less completely in culturally deprived children for two reasons. First, the culturally deprived child lacks the necessary repertoire for clear and stable abstractions. Second, for lack of adequate practice, he has not acquired sufficient facility in relating abstractions to each other with the benefit of concrete-empirical props, so that he can later dispense with their assistance at the same age as his environmentally more favored contemporaries.[5]

In 1965 the Executive Committee of the National Council of Teachers of English

> . . . appointed a special Task Force to study and describe current programs

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[4]Walter Loban, "A Sustained Program of Language Learning," in Richard Corbin and Muriel Crosby, *Language Programs for the Disadvantaged* (Champaign, Ill. NCTE, 1965 p. 223.

[5]David P. Ausubel, "The Effects of Cultural Deprivation on Learning Patterns," Staten W. Webster, ed., *The Disadvantaged Learner* (San Francisco, California: Chandler Pub. Co., 1966), p. 253.

throughout the nation. The committee directed the Task Force to concern itself with the teaching of language in any of its dimensions . . .[6]

The reports noted that much worthwhile work was being done, but mainly outside the secondary school classroom.

It is my contention that curriculum and instruction in the area of English can be designed immediately to combat the depression and distress of the disadvantaged children in our secondary schools.

I agree with Richard Corbin that:

> Education for the disadvantaged means chiefly English for the disadvantaged, since our language is central to all other aspects of our culture. Without the ability to speak, read, and to some extent write the standard dialect, the individual, whatever his inherent but unrealized intelligence, can never hope to enjoy vocational success or social acceptance.[7]

What kind of teachers, methods and materials do we need? What have we on hand? How can we prepare for the future? Aleda E. Druding sees the teacher as the key to freeing the disadvantaged. Her ideal will be "dedicated, selfless, sensitive, skillful, ready to sacrifice, serve, support, forgive . . ."[8]

Miriam Goldberg suggests that although we have no systematic data, we should dare to be hypothetical, using implications from whatever research and observations we have of teacher behavior and of the work and character of disadvantaged pupils. She recommends that the teacher respect the children, hoping for respect in return. The teacher's reaction to the slum situation may be one of sorrow and anger. He may even see no hope for these children whose norm is so different from his. But he must adapt and direct his feeling in order to approach this alien culture, not as a judge, but as a student learning to understand the mores of other groups.[9]

The teacher must recognize the confusion created by the conflict between the two cultures that the disadvantaged experience: home, street, and neighborhood versus school and the society that maintains the school. Even if the language of the disadvantaged is distorted, it still represents their functional alliance to their lives. The teacher must accept this substandard norm without looking down upon the children and without attempting to control them through guilt and shame.

He must let the students know that he expects more from them than they seem to be able to produce at the moment. But he must be certain, too, to reward any of the children's efforts with sincere praise and little censure.

Allan C. Ornstein reaffirms Miriam Goldberg's ideas and collates what active and interested sociologists and psychologists define as the best classroom procedures suited to work with the disadvantaged. According to Mr. Ornstein

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[6]Richard Corbin and Muriel Crosby, *Language Programs for the Disadvantaged* (Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1965), p. 19.

[7]Richard Corbin, "English Programs for the Disadvantaged" in *Bulletin* of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, Vol. 51, No. 318 (April, 1967), 79.

[8]Aleda E. Druding, "Selection and Preparation of Teachers to serve in Schools in Culturally Different Areas," in *Improving English Skills of Culturally Different Youth* (Washington, D. C.: USOE, 1964), 187.

[9]Miriam Goldberg, "Adapting Teacher Style to Pupil Differences: Teachers for Disadvantaged Children," in Joe L. Frost, *et. al.*, *The Disadvantaged Child* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1966), synthesis of pp. 345-361.

the teacher must from the start establish himself as an authority figure, ready to provide these children with direction through a system of rules and practical objectives. Moreover, the teacher must always act in accordance with these rules and objectives because the disadvantaged cannot cope with change. This firmness does not preclude flexibility. While the teacher must be careful, he should not be exacting. Above all he must accept these children as they are, never attacking their pride or ridiculing them and never trying to mold them to his middle-class standards. This requires stamina and creativity on the part of the teacher, who must be particularly careful not to let his own self-confidence be undermined.

The teacher must serve as a model, always dressing neatly and ordering his classroom to be clean and attractive. He should learn to know each student well, and hold each one accountable for his own behavior. No class should ever be punished for any one individual's delinquency.

Before beginning the day's lesson, the teacher should have each child's attention, and he should remain constantly aware of the tone of the class, facing them at all times. Any mechanical procedures requiring that he turn his back to the class, such as erasing the blackboard, should be done by a student.

The teacher must always be prepared to solve his own classroom problems as they appear, never softening to a sentimental point, always remaining aware that it is his responsibility to bring these disadvantaged children up and away from their substandard level.

> These children require a strict, structured, workable routine. They need and want a teacher who can assure them the stability they usually do not receive at home.[10]

In sum, the teacher of the disadvantaged children should be a showman with an expanding repertoire of performances and a scholar with extensive knowledge of and experience in the use of the English language and its literature.

Realistically, until we observe, classify, and compare teachers successful with the disadvantaged, we cannot prove the validity of this hypothetical ideal. Miriam Goldberg feels that in the meantime, pretraining for student teachers or in-service training for teachers already in the classroom can help develop such an ideal. She recommends that instruction offer:

> (a) mastery of subject matter; (b) the acquisition of an understanding of the major concepts from the behavioral and social sciences and their relevance to teaching disadvantaged children; and (c) the development of a repertoire of teaching strategies, which hold promise for working with disadvantaged pupils.[11]

In the future this would mean developing new courses, providing opportunities for new laboratory experiences, and arranging for observations of all stages of teaching by those whose work has already been judged effective with the disadvantaged.

Nor are these generalizations entirely hypothetical. Some school systems have already begun significant programs to acquaint teachers with the problems of the disadvantaged. Some experimental teaching programs are in operation; reports are being presented, and many are worth examining and trying.

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[10]Allan C. Ornstein, "Teaching the Disadvantaged," *Education Forum*, Vol. 31, (January, 1967), 215-223.

[11]Goldberg, *op. cit.*, p. 355.

Hunter College and Queens College of the City University of New York not only have their student teachers practice teaching in schools with disadvantaged students, but also see that these new teachers acquaint themselves carefully with the community in which they will be teaching by taking part in its activities.

> This series of field experiences culminating in student teaching can reduce the reality shock to such a degree that the graduate of such a preparatory program is a veteran of the milieu of the disadvantaged even before embarking upon a regular teaching assignment.[12]

To combat the lack of capable and qualified teachers for the disadvantaged in the large city slums, fifteen of the largest urban school districts in the United States, in cooperation with metropolitan colleges, formed the Great Cities Research Council.

> One of the very unique features of this Great Cities program would be the fact that it would be jointly operated by the city school system and the cooperating college or university. In most of the cities the proposed programs would have co-directors.[13] One director is from the city school system and one from the university.

The Buffalo Public Schools, cooperating with the State University of New York at Buffalo and the State University College at Buffalo, proposed establishing a center with one-way and/or closed circuit television, set up so that student teachers could see not only an inner city school, mainly Negro, but also a heterogeneous school in the process of becoming Negro.

The Los Angeles City Public Schools which in cooperation with the University of Southern California work with disadvantaged Mexican-Americans advise that a teacher gain direct experience with the entire community before entering the classroom. Here too, the cooperating schools plan to provide freedom "for material changes in school organization, curriculum content, and methodology."[14]

Other such joint projects are being proposed by the New York City Public Schools in cooperation with Queens College of the City University of New York, the Pittsburgh, Duquesne University and other associated colleges, the Chicago Public Schools in cooperation with Northwestern University and the Philadelphia Public Schools in cooperation with Temple University.

> Encouraging signs can thus be noted that the cooperative endeavors required to prepare more effective teachers of the disadvantaged are becoming more common. Manifestation of close cooperation between school systems and colleges or universities in training teachers of the disadvantaged are evidenced increasingly in the development of multi-city programs similar to that of the Great Cities Research Council.
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> Such programs potentially can also serve as the wedge through which departments and schools other than education in universities can begin to commit resources and research attention to the host of urban problems confronting the country.[15]

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[12]Michael D. Usdan, "The Preparation of Teachers for the Disadvantaged," in Jerome Hellmuth, ed., *Disadvantaged Child* (Seattle, Washington: Special Child Pub., 1967), p. 230.

[13]*Ibid.*, pp. 233-234.

[14]*Ibid.*, p. 241.

[15]*Ibid.*, pp. 250-251.

For the present there is much we can do in our local school areas. Workshops led by experts in child development, sociology, anthropology, curriculum, and reading diagnosis procedures could be set up as part of a summer program on a college campus, since many boards of education now reimburse teachers for tuition expended. During the school year, full day workshops involving experienced and inexperienced teachers of the disadvantaged could be set up to develop teaching techniques. Role playing is a useful method for trying new ideas and developing new skills. At such workshops, Lawrence A. Hopp, Director of the Upward Bound Program on the Douglass Campus in the summer of 1965, prepared a large group of teachers to work with 150 disadvantaged youths.

Professor Hopp found, as did Miriam Goldberg, that

> . . . feelings and values might also be involved and reshaped through the study of literary works. The novel and the short story which, at their best, provide a penetrating and illuminating exposition of life's fundamenal conflicts, often have the power to transport the reader into the lives of people unlike himself but, who, nonetheless, are with him in many aspects of the human predicament.[16]

Many such titles suggested by supervisors to several Woodbridge teachers working with the disadvantaged this past year were read, discussed, and found to be valuable in giving the teacher a better understanding of his students. Getting teachers to read extensively beyond their daily school program was not a simple chore. We offered mainly "thin" paperbacks which could be read quickly, suggesting at the same time that the teachers sample these pieces for possible class use. The strategy worked. Even better, it served as a good incentive. Many teachers got a feeling of success from reading these books quickly, and moved on to ask for, or to discover by themselves, more advanced material on minority conflicts.

In all communities supervision can begin at once to contact teachers during their professional periods, after school, during regularly scheduled department meetings, or at specified in-service sessions. Although the National Council of Teachers of English reports that too many teachers in the area of English are poorly or only partially prepared to teach the subject, I found this past year in my visits throughout the state of New Jersey that each system, while often inadequately staffed, still was fortunate in having a handful of well-ordered, knowledgeable teachers who willingly assisted supervision in disseminating ideas.

A. Harry Passow notes that although many experimental programs are in operation, as yet there is little research indicating any fool-proof methods which work especially well with the disadvantaged. Since we know that

> . . . in a modern technical society language and communication are essential for individual and social survival and development,[17]

we must try many methods which have had some positive results, in an attempt to help the disadvantaged children establish basic skills both to fill their practical needs for the moment and to aid their mobility in and adaptability to the society outside their ghetto.

Haberman insists that

> . . . all youngsters need to develop language that will go beyond immedi-

[16]Goldberg, *op. cit.*, p. 357.

[17]A. Harry Passow, "Instructional Content for Depressed Urban Centers: Problems and Approaches," in Passow, *et. al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 354.

ate social and material needs to usages that will help them to share ideas, control their own behavior and engage in the processes of thinking.[18]

Here Ausubel says:

> An effective and appropriate teaching strategy for the culturally deprived child must therefore emphasize these three considerations: (a) the selection of initial learning material geared to the learner's existing state of readiness; (b) mastery and consolidation of all ongoing learning tasks before new tasks are introduced, so as to provide the necessary foundation for successful and sequential learning and to prevent unreadiness for future learning tasks; and (c) the use of structured learning materials optimally organized to facilitate efficient sequential learning.[19]

The Roberts English Series, a linguistics program involving reading, literature, grammar, usage, and writing shows some possibilities of achieving *Ausubel's* recommendations.[20]

Ausubel also agrees with many others that:

> Since motivation is not an indispensable condition for short-term and limited-quantity learning, it is not necessary to postpone learning activities until appropriate interests and motivation have been developed. Frequently the best way of motivating an unmotivated pupil is to ignore his motivational state for the time being and concentrate on teaching him as effectively as possible.[21]

Of course this would involve much strategy. Setting short range goals at first, the teacher would have to formulate ways to use each individual's strengths, to make each individual aware of his strength, and to help him be patient with his deficiencies until he could overcome them. Teacher evaluations of the students, whether verbal or in writing, should be honest but positive. Frank Reissman suggests that we can produce more beneficial change in disadvantaged children if we understand and utilize individual patterns of learning. Some children learn best through reading or hearing; others learn through physical operations; some learn quickly, others slowly; some learn in a one track way; others are flexible. Some like to work in a cold room, some a warm room; some work in long periods, some need frequent breaks.[22]

Our immediate aims as teachers of English to the disadvantaged would be to develop their auditory and visual discrimination, to increase their attention span and their observation skills, to help them develop the ability to follow directions and to guide them eventually to express themselves verbally. Many procedures recommended for elementary classes would work well with the disadvantaged junior high school student. Research tells us that by the time the disadvantaged reach the seventh grade they are many years behind their advantaged contemporaries and severely in need of remedial and compensatory measures.

Since disadvantaged children like games, we can employ a game technique in helping them to learn how to listen attentively and discriminatingly. For

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[18]Martin Haberman, "Materials the Disadvantaged Need and Don't Need," *Educational Leadership*, Vol. 24 (April, 1967), p. 613.

[19]David A. Ausubel, "Suggested Strategy for Teaching Socially Disadvantaged Learners," in Webster, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 468.

[20]*The Roberts English Series* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1966). Grades 3-8 published. Grade 9 in preparation.

[21]Ausubel, *op. cit.*, p. 473.

[22]Frank Riessman, "The Strategy of Style," in Passow, *et. al.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 326-334.

example, the teacher can direct the pupils in the class to close their eyes. He then produces a sequence of sounds such as shutting a door, ringing a bell, tapping a ruler, dropping a book to the floor, etc., after which the students open their eyes and take turns at relating what they heard in the sequence in which they heard it. Advisedly the teacher would start with three sounds, daily increasing the number of sequences as the students develop the skills of listening carefully.

The teacher can also follow the game pattern in giving directions for the students to remember and repeat. The directions should be brief, simple, and not repeated. Dramatizing words with similar initial sounds such as "push," "pull," "punch," can also increase auditory discrimination.

Certainly the teacher can also use records, tapes, and tapes in language laboratories. Reading aloud to students is particularly worthwhile.

Under a United States Office of Education grant, a team of investigators developed a set of audio tapes and discs with lessons designed to stimulate children to listen to sounds. Although the plan was created originally for fourth graders, as I noted above, it could be used very effectively with disadvantaged junior high school students. These *Programmed Experiences in Creative Thinking* contain unusual sounds which stimulate the listener's imagination. There are no standards and no exact answers, so that the students need not be afraid of failure.[23]

To increase visual perception, the teacher can place something new in the room each day, giving the class a reason for discovering and reporting the addition. Playing detective can be fun. The teacher can also provide small objects with which the students are not familiar and have them examine and react to each item. A piece of fruit, known or unknown, can be handled, observed, smelled, and even tasted.

Pictures, slides, and film strips, with the teacher at first introducing the content, may help direct the pupils to observe more carefully for greater details. After the students have gained some practice and skill, they can take turns at noting what they see without any help from the teacher. Here again it is best to begin by asking the students to note just three points, and then to increase the requests to number several dozen.

Getting the disadvantaged children to verbalize is a more difficult task. These children are afraid to talk because they know that their language is substandard; they are afraid of failing and being rejected. Programmed instruction, though not a panacea, often helps because it adjusts to each child's differences. Feedback is immediate and without censure. Accumulated small successes with these programmed materials can help the deprived students tune back into the classroom situation.

The teacher may also be able to involve these children through puppet shows, pantomime, or role playing where gestures are used instead of speech. Disadvantaged children are skilled in using their hands and bodies to communicate and will feel safer with a known factor. Practice tapes treating English as a second language can then be used in the language laboratory.

If standard English is taught as a second language, it is not necessary to

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[23]B. F. Cunningham and E. P. Torrance, *Sounds and Images:* Teachers' Guide and Recorded Text (New York: Ginn, 1965), pp. 15-17.

insist that the child reject entirely the other or "first" language.[24]

Permitting these children to keep their "first" language and sparing them public censure of their inabilities by providing laboratory experiences, can free them to want to better their language. To this the teacher can add aural-oral pattern drills in the socially accepted dialect and can practice with the class in chorus or call on students individually. Memorizing jingles and bits of poetry and reading aloud add interesting variation to pattern drills. The Macmillan Company's paperbacks *Poems to Enjoy* and *Poems to Remember* would be very useful for this activity.

Loban suggests that the deprived be permitted to use their own dialect through the fourth grade. By the fifth, sixth, and seventh grades these children are aware enough of social distinctions to know their substandard dialect will not benefit them. Here Loban

> . . . would select most carefully the teachers who had no snobbish attitudes about language, the scholar-linguist-humanists whom one could most safely entrust with the important task of explaining the sociological truth to these children.
>
> Then from grades 6-12 one would try to eliminate as far as possible the use of social class dialect *in school*. The aim in school would be to help young people acquire this very important kind of dialect, the second language they need.[25]

The ability to verbalize can also be developed through practice in labelling. The teacher can have the children name the real and easily seen objects around them, and, as they increase their skills and enjoy success, have them discover and label the less easily seen objects in the room. The words used should be discussed, repeated, and patterned.

This activity can easily be expanded to give the students a feeling of independence by having them note and label the world they know, such as it is, outside the school. Often this can lead to the beginning of open-ended discussions. I tried this successfully with twelfth graders, who astonished themselves when they became aware of the infinite number of sights, sounds, smells, and objects on the road just between home and school.

I have found also that myths, legends, and tall tales narrated, read aloud by the teacher, or played on a record can trigger a kind of freedom in spirit and imagination which may stimulate the students to repeat the unbelievable or to create their own fantasies. The Globe Publishing Company's *American Fokelore and Legends* and *Myths and Folk Tales Around the World* are elementary in reading grade range, but high enough in interest content to reach even the ninth and tenth grade disadvantaged students.

It is also our responsibility as teachers of English to be concerned with helping the disadvantaged improve their reading abilities. We know they are deficient in this skill; and we know we are not professionally trained as teachers of reading, but we cannot wait for the remedial reading teacher to step in and help.

We can take steps to determine informally the approximate reading level of our students. Perhaps a remedial reading teacher could provide us with

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[24]Charlotte K. Brooks, "Some Approaches to Teaching English as a Second Language," in Staten W. Webster, ed., *The Disadvantaged Learner* (San Francisco, Calif.: Chandler Publishing, 1966), p. 519.

[25]Loban, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

graded materials from which we could duplicate about 200 words. Or we could choose a portion from any book we plan to use and offer a sample from it to the class for silent reading. Following this the students would be asked to answer two factual questions and two inferential questions and to give a brief summary of what they read. From the start we would have to assure the class that this is not a test; that they will not be graded; that they cannot fail; and that they are serving themselves by giving us a clue to determine where we can reasonably begin instruction with them.

To determine better the approximate instructional level, we could duplicate another 200 words for oral reading. Here it would be judicious to permit the class time to prepare the piece silently. Then, while one student is called on to read aloud, the others turn their papers over and listen. When the students develop a feeling of security that whatever they do will be accepted, we can ask them to sight read.

For practice in reading, the teacher can divide her class into three groups. One group would read with her, one would read silently, and the third would read along with the now available recordings.

Fortunately several publishers have produced some good, tested reading programs. These include the SRA series, Wiley's *Springboards*, Simon and Schuster's *Papertexts*, Follett's Turner-Livingston Series, Scholastic Magazine's *Scope* and AEP's *Read*. These materials are well adapted to disadvantaged students from grades seven through twelve. The teacher can easily examine these publications and choose what suits his class best at any given time.

Of particular quality are the Macmillan Company's *Gateway Series* and Holt, Rhineheart and Winston's *Impact*. The *Gateway* project was begun originally under a United States Office of Education grant as a part of *Project English*. It was later revised and augmented under the leadership of Marjorie Smiley and her associates in the Department of Education of Hunter College of the City University of New York. The *Impact* program, guided and edited by Lawana Trout and Charlotte Brooks, is similar in design to *Gateway*. Both are paperbound and include poems, songs, short stories and excerpts from novels.

Most of the selections relate directly to the problems of the disadvantaged through themes such as adolescence or minority group problems. Directions to the teacher in carefully designed manuals facilitate the integration of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Both programs include records and supplementary materials.

Both programs stimulate language activities by arousing emotions and ideas which demand immediate expression. According to a National Council of Teacher of English report on the *Gateway* program,

> composition skills, according to the teachers, have improved remarkably and reading is also improving because the materials the students read are interesting to them.[26]

One pilot program in the Woodbridge system proved worthy enough for me to try in our five junior high schools this September, 1968. I feel that the *Impact* approach, which I am trying for the first time, will be equally successful. The sophistication of much of the material in *Impact* should satisfy the disadvantaged on the senior high school level.

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[26] *Language Programs for the Disadvantaged, op. cit.*, p. 113.

In addition to these basic packaged programs, a teacher may now choose from an infinite number of paperbacks, good in literary quality and high in interest appeal. Daniel Fader in *Hooked on Books* makes innumerable suggestions.[27] Since his publication, however, many more titles worthy of consideration have appeared. I recommend contacting such publishers as Dell, Bantam, Tempo, Washington Square Press, and Berkley Medallion. Their catalogues adequately categorize the many materials according to reading grade level and interest level. They list books which have good themes and plots, easily remembered characters, problems common to all people, stories helping to build self-images, tales identifying minority heroes, and situations which help change attitudes and values, all of which help children adapt to urban living.

I found that many of these titles provided developmental tasks for the disadvantaged students, giving them a sense of achievement and completion and motivating them to attempt not only readings dealing with the contemporary scene, but also those involving our literary heritage. The National Council of Teachers of English notes:

> Teaching and discussing literature with disadvantaged students on any level need not be done with diluted materials or adapted classics. Literature can and should be taught to all students at all levels.[28]

It is also our responsibility as teachers of English to include in our program for the disadvantaged more than mere direction for these children to decode graphemes on the printed page. We must help them develop insight, recognize, define, and analyze problems, draw inferences, and command a method of reasoning.

To aid them in the process of thinking and to help them grow in human relationships, we can use their own experiences as a base for problem solving and decision making. Subjects such as birth, death, unemployment, civil rights, methods of defense, detentions, arrests, and social behavior relate directly to their needs and understanding. For lighter moments, sports and entertainment information gleaned from radio, television, and newspaper items could move these children to verbalize.

The Holt, Rhinehart, and Winston *Language and Discovery Series*, designed by Neil Postman, instructor in New York University's School of Education, approaches language skills through problem solving situations. Postman believes

> . . . that thinking is a necessary activity of human life, that there are effective and ineffective methods of solving problems through thought, that the job of education should be to promote effective methods of thinking, and that this can be accomplished through actual involvement of the student in the thinking process.
>
> The process of induction involves the observation of new and/or familiar data, the perception of common elements, the statement of a generalization, the testing of the generalization through analysis of further data, and frequently the modification of the generalization.[29]

These ideas follow logically the earlier suggestions recommended for developing language skills. Since the texts are not marked with a grade level, the

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[27]Daniel D. Fader, *Hooked on Books*, Berkley Medallion (New York: Berkley Publishing Company, 1966).

[28]*Language Programs for the Disadvantaged*, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

[29]Neil Postman, Harold Morine, Greta Morine, *Discovering Your Language* (New York: Holt, Rhinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1963), p. 6, p. 7.

teacher can choose the one he thinks will serve best as a starting point for his students. The six books in these series rely heavily on semantics, so that a well-rounded program of English would need to include, along with the Postman materials, a program similar to the Roberts linguistic series noted before.

The Education Division of the New York Times on 42nd Street in New York City offers many free curriculum guide pamphlets concerned with the teaching of intelligent reading of the newspaper. Their suggestions for involving the reluctant learner include vocabulary building and critical thinking.

In attempting to develop my students' critical thinking, I used comic books, a medium attractive to the disadvantaged and most unexpected in school. The following pattern is a suggestion which can be adapted in many ways:

GENERAL TOPIC: MASS MEDIA

Mass media is a means of disseminating information or entertainment to large groups of people.

Specific topic: Comic Books

Aims:

To define mass media
To determine how comic books are a part of mass media
To research the history of comic books
To examine current standards for comic books
To examine the varieties of types of comic books
To examine the effect of comic books on the teen-age world
To evaluate the teen-age reaction to the comic book

Materials:

Encyclopedias, Comic Code Authority Manual, comic books

Procedures:

Consult librarian for help.
Have students write several comic book publishers for Comic Code Manual.
Try to have as many comic books donated as possible.
Have each student purchase one twelve cent-comic.
Assign at least three students to purchase the same book for analysis.
Observe and discuss cover, type print, art, language, theme, handling of good and evil, inferences drawing on possible propaganda, advertisements, etc.
Does predominance of evil exist to such a degree that even when good conquers, evil remains as the stronger image?
What is the father's role?
What is the mother's role?
How closely are code authority rules obeyed?

If possible relate the discussion to the lives of the students. Take the assignment seriously, and have the students present their findings in panel discussions. The same type unit can be applied to an analysis of radio and television programs.

After having attempted to help the disadvantaged develop their abilities to listen, observe, record verbally, read with comprehension, and think logically and critically, the English teacher is still responsible for helping them write in a socially acceptable manner. For their initial writings, the students can use their

own experiences. Then the teacher can recommend that the students write about imagined experiences; or, he can present an idea for discussion, permit verbal exchanges, and conclude by having the students write essays based on these discussions.

Often problem solving is a good way of stimulating student participation. The students can be presented with the situation of twelve people in a bomb shelter who discover they have food and water for only seven. After a day or two for reflection, the students are asked to write an essay stating the reasons why one particular member should be permitted to stay and why another be compelled to leave.

Pictures and music also stimulate writing. The Bantam paperback collections, *Stop, Look, and Write* and *The Writer's Eye* are good sources of inexpensive pictoral materials. Listening to many types of music may result in different forms of writing. Ballad writing comes with a degree of naturalness after exposures to the voices and instruments of the modern performers. Teachers of students at all levels are using this technique.

After the students have exercised their creativity, whatever they have achieved should be recognized as worthy and complimented, and should be duplicated and organized into book form for a permanent place in the class library. Talented students could design a cover, adding to the meaningfulness of the unit.

Keeping journals, as recommended by Daniel Fader,[30] can also give students fluency in the written word. In my own classes I appointed three students of different temperaments to keep journals for the period of ten school days. On the eleventh day they read their entries in front of the class. Since I never looked at their writing, there was no tension from concern for spelling, punctuation, paragraphing, etc. The students felt it was a distinction to have been chosen, and they took pride in relating to the rest of the class what they had considered worthy of recording. The different points of view added color to the presentations, and in general the summaries served as an excellent evaluation, not only of the students' accomplishments and failings, but also of mine. After the initial readings, class members volunteered eagerly to keep the journals. I had to appoint a class secretary to handle the scheduling.

Films and field trips, judiciously used, can also bring both vicarious and actual experiences to these disadvantaged students, helping them bridge the gap between the emptiness and impoverishment they have experienced and the better life we hope to lead them into.

Father John M. Culkin, director of Fordham University's Center for Communication, believes that "For Kids, Doing Is More Fun Than Viewing." Children who had been provided 8-mm Instamatic movie cameras developed a sense of "insight and control" when they viewed films they had taken of their neighborhood and its environs.

> Once they had taken a picture of these things they were able to talk about them. And that, brethren, is the stuff which hope is made.

Nor can schools complain that they cannot afford to provide the materials for these lessons because

> Foundations, individuals, professionals and government agencies are awakening to the truth, goodness and beauty of these creative uses of the media.

and

> The National Association of Photographic Manufacturers has set up a series

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[30]Fader, *op. cit.*

of projects in which they supply equipment, instruction and showcasing for the work of inner-city kids.[31]

Other successes worth observing and following up have been recorded these past few years. The following summaries are suggestions which serve as a general pattern.

Ruth I. Golden describes in a 1964 United States Office of Education report the taped lessons in oral communication which she developed while on a two-year federal grant. She became aware of the need for such materials while working on a Ford Foundation project which examined substandard language usage. The result was *Improving Patterns of Language Usage,* published by the Wayne State University Press in 1960. Under the federal grant she designed a set of 14 lessons for listening-repeating and for some writing. The tapes are a kind of teaching machine, explaining the structure of language and giving examples of standard usage patterns, with opportunities for the students to practice. The tapes, which run a little less than 30 minutes, combine a linguistic with a traditional approach. They employ a variety of male and female voices to sustain interest and are useful in any foreign language laboratory set-up.

Ruth Golden's experiment took place in a classroom with two phonojack boards and twelve earphone stations. She set up two control groups and two experimental groups, all of whom took two oral and two written tests before and after the sessions. Although the materials and techniques were the same for each group, there was one difference: the control group read the lesson in the booths, whereas the experimental group heard the lessons on tape. Speech patterns improved significantly more with the groups that used tape.

From this program and from her twenty years of experience as a successful teacher, Miss Golden also offers the following suggestions:

At the beginning of the term she has an orientation period to discuss the purposes of and need for education, the aspects of language, and the need for good usage. After this, to lay the ground work for speech drills later in the semester, she has the students write to her in letter form their aims for the term. The class also plans talks to be taped and projects to be presented. These projects usually provide material for compositions.

Her "Class on Parade" is a good device for brief oral presentations. She has her students rise by rows to recite. As each does his part he moves to the other side of the room. Standing with a group seems to help the students feel less self-conscious. Rarely is anyone unprepared.

The "Inquiring Reporter" technique, as she handles it, is also good for oral communication. A student reporter asks each pupil two or three questions from a list which everyone has had time to consider. The student may be asked to recall a famous saying, to tell what this saying means to him in his own life, to recite memory work in small doses or to give an explanation of a courtesy rule.[32]

Another Ford Foundation experiment showing good results in oral use of language was conducted at Madison Junior High School in Oakland, California,

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[31]John M. Culkin, S.J., "For Kids, Doing Is More Fun Than Viewing," *New York Times,* July 28, 1968, Sec. 2, p. 1 & 3.

[32]Ruth I. Golden, "Ways to Improve Oral Communication of Culturally Different Youth," in *Improving English Skills of Culturally Different Youth* (Washington, D. C.: USOE, 1964).

by Ellen Newman, a second-year teacher. Like Golden, Newman used the foreign language laboratory, placing emphasis on hearing, listening, imitating, and then drilling to increase vocabulary for improved verbal expression.

In Miss Newman's experiment, fifteen seventh graders met two days a week before school in a conference room. Attendance was voluntary; there were no grades, no books, no homework. All class work was taped. The initial tapes were monitored for general and individual language differences. At first the students did not even hear their substandard expressions. To ease them into better speech, Miss Newman gave the students parts in socio-dramas and assigned them to prepare short talks giving a definite point of view or defending a specific belief.

Whatever role playing they did involved real life situations, such as ordering groceries, answering advertisements, and delivering messages. Here they could comfortably use their own dialects as a start.

> Much of the work during the semester centered on the study of verbs and tenses, though these terms were not employed. The students were not given any rules. Instead, corrections were made when the child realized that something sounded strange. For example, a sentence was placed on the board and students were asked to replace the underlined word with one of their own choice. Thus: "Yesterday I washed my sweater." First the sentence was read with the substitution for the verb, then in later practices the word yesterday was replaced by tomorrow.[33]

This helped increase vocabularies as well as usage. Later the children created stories based on pictures shown to them. By this time their speech had shown improvement, and they were ready for writing responses. The experiment proved successful.

Still another program, financed by both the Ford Foundation and the President's Commission on Delinquency and Youth Crime, was housed in San Francisco's Youth Opportunity Center in September, 1963, and used some techniques which could be tried on a high school level. Helaine Dawson, now adult education director at the San Francisco University, worked with about two hundred 18 to 22-year-old school dropouts.

Ninety-five percent of her students are still gainfully employed and progressing. Only five percent failed to adapt. In fact, ten male students continued their education at the University of California.

Miss Dawson began with their world. Then she attempted change.

> Teaching and language are a process, and a process implies change. Language results in change; nothing remains exactly the same. Changing, or becoming, is a concomitant of learning.[34]

After she had recorded her class's language habits on tape, they listened to themselves. She made corrections, pattern drilled with English treated as a second language, and reviewed daily.

To continue drill on better usage and to establish more fluent communications, Miss Dawson used role playing. She felt that assuming the part of another

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[33]Ellen Newman, "An Experiment in Oral Language," Webster, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 513.
[34]Helaine Dawson, *On the Outskirts of Hope* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1968), p. 119.

individual would lead to a better understanding of one's companions and to a clue to oneself. She never rushed her students. Time and patience were her key ideas.

One unit in role playing included a playlet with a district attorney, a counsel for the defendant, witnesses for the defense and for the prosecution, a guard, a four-man sample jury, and a judge. The students wrote their own script, using half of each class period for rehearsal. The teacher used this activity as an incentive for the class to study vowel sounds and pronoun usage and in general to improve language patterns.

To increase their vocabularies, Miss Dawson began by using words from their daily lives. Moving slowly, she introduced new concepts, always trying to parallel examples with what the students already knew. She used many illustrations and made sure the children understood each lesson before moving on to the next.

To help them develop the skill of choosing the exact word, she used the idea of writing telegrams, a "fun" technique which the students identified with saving money.

Discussion sessions were also rewarding experiences for the students, for they aroused many interests, encouraged interaction, improved communication skills, and developed self-confidence.

To develop listening skills, Miss Dawson used equipment provided by the telephone company. She called individual students and left a message which they had to record in writing and then transmit. Beginning with simple messages, slowly stated, she gradually complicated the communication, varied it, and projected it at greater rates of speed.

Miss Dawson used the errors made in the written messages as bases for review. In helping her class improve their spelling she never drilled on more than ten words at a time, often fewer. This diminished the children's fear of failure.

Visitors added variety and suspense to the class sessions. The people who came did not lecture, but participated in the regular class schedule. Often the visitors were men and women from slum areas who had been able to overcome their initial handicap to realize a goal in the "outside world." Sometimes they were employers and employees from job centers which the students would have an opportunity to tour. Miss Dawson advises judicious use of such trips, but cautions that they should not become merely time slot fillers.

She also advises careful use of films, slides, and film strips. If these techniques are related directly to the needs and interests of the class, and if the students are prepared for each presentation, they will begin to develop listening habits, to increase their thinking and perception, and to attempt to conceptualize. Written compositions in which the students evaluate these experiences will serve not only as a vehicle for developing the above skills, but also as another source for checking misspelled words and unacceptable language patterns.

To stimulate reading, usually regarded as a "square" activity by these young adults because they are not familiar with it and are afraid of failure, Miss Dawson used a bulletin board for exciting, readable notices. She had her students keep a running file of news clips on topics they thought relevant. For

extra reading material she used consumer's guides and driver's manuals, car business news reports and pamphlets on youth and the law.

Miss Dawson's many other worthwhile practical techniques recorded in *On the Outskirts of Hope* are worth investigating. In general she notes:

> There must be continuity of subject matter. It is unwise to jump from topic to topic without the thread of continuity. Free association is encouraged, but the students should be taught how to pursue topics in depth. If the students are involved in a controversial discussion when the bell rings, it is your (the teacher's) responsibility to note where they left off and to pick up from this point in the following session. When you do this, students become aware that you are listening to them and their incentive for learning increases.[35]

There are many more such projects naming specific techniques and materials which work well with disadvantaged learners. The attached bibliography can serve as a directional signal to extensive and varied expositions dealing with this difficult task.

Nor is the problem of the disadvantaged peculiarly American. David Holbrook, poet, teacher, and a fellow of King's College, Cambridge, considers their situation in his *English for the Rejected.* He says that

> . . . the "unseen" elements of sympathetic respect for the creature, and the imaginative-creative element in teaching, are the most important and efficient means to develop the child's capacities.[36]

His methods are like those discussed in this paper. He uses tape recorders, tapes, records, puppet theaters, television, cameras, all kinds of theater equipment, typewriters, duplicating machines, role playing, discussion groups, etc. In some of his discussions, Holbrook's students discuss moral issues, such as whether a wife should obey her husband. In others, they create dialogues imagining how a conversation would develop between, for example, a detective and a smuggler.

These discussions are recorded, corrected, duplicated, and used as stimulating models or as a basis for serial stories continuing from lesson to lesson.

Most noteworthy is Mr. Holbrook's inclusion in his curriculum of fine pieces of literature. He does not stay with the "thin" book but, by feeding small portions, even of Shakespeare, to his "backward" students, he often is able to interest them in the whole work. He feels:

> Any language is developed intuitively and unconsciously by popular use: Chaucer, Langland, Dekker, Nashe, Bunyan and Clare came before the grammarians. Fluent literacy is a very different matter from "correct English" — for all of us it is at times a matter of life and death, from reading a notice saying "Danger, radioactivity," to seeking ways of verbal exchange out of a threatened breakdown of our marrige, or even to secure a sense of significance in life.
>
> Fluent literacy comes from the free imaginative work as suggested in this book — a stern, life-promoting, vigorous discipline.[37]

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[35] *Ibid.*, p. 181.
[36] David Holbrook, *English for the Rejected* (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 1964), p. 3.
[37] *Ibid.*, p. 243.

This paper has dealt generally with disadvantaged children's sociological, psychological, and linguistic characteristics, with the kind of teacher and teacher preparation needed to help these children, and with suggestions for materials and methods which have been used with adequate success in language arts programs. I feel that the propositions are practical and could be employed in classes beginning this September, 1968. I also feel that these suggestions, while incomplete, can serve to trigger many other ideas, and that while the suggestions are intended primarily for use with disadvantaged youth, all youth could benefit.

I urge all readers to note that these approaches and materials are designed to start with children as they are,

> not simply to entertain the children by indulging their interest — although that is, in the situation, a worthy aim — but to help them build upon what they have and to develop the kinds of understanding and competence which will enable them to adapt to the school, succeed in learning, and become useful productive members of urban society.[38]

[38]Marcella G. Krueger, "Choosing Books for the Disadvantaged," in Webster, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 546.

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